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'WE, THE UNDERSIGNED--'

Norris kept his word with regard to the Bishop's exclusion from the Eleven. The team which had beaten the O.B.s had not had the benefit of his assistance, Lorimer appearing in his stead. Lorimer was a fast right-hand bowler, deadly in House matches or on a very bad wicket. He was the mainstay of the Second Eleven attack, and in an ordinary year would have been certain of his First Eleven cap. This season, however, with Gosling, Baynes, and the Bishop, the School had been unusually strong, and Lorimer had had to wait.

The non-appearance of his name on the notice-board came as no surprise to Gethryn. He had had the advantage of listening to Norris's views on the subject. But when Marriott grasped the facts of the case, he went to Norris and raved. Norris, as is right and proper in the captain of a School team when the wisdom of his actions is called into question, treated him with no respect whatever.

'It's no good talking,' he said, when Marriott had finished a brisk opening speech, 'I know perfectly well what I'm doing.'

'Then there's no excuse for you at all,' said Marriott. 'If you were mad or delirious I could understand it.'

'Come and have an ice,' said Norris.

'Ice!' snorted Marriott. 'What's the good of standing there babbling about ices! Do you know we haven't beaten the O.B.s for four years?'

'We shall beat them this year.'

'Not without Gethryn.'

'We certainly shan't beat them with Gethryn, because he's not going to play. A chap who chooses the day of the M.C.C. match to go off for the afternoon, and then refuses to explain, can consider himself jolly well chucked until further notice. Feel ready for that ice yet?'

'Don't be an ass.'

'Well, if ever you do get any ice, take my tip and tie it carefully round your head in a handkerchief. Then perhaps you'll be able to see why Gethryn isn't playing against the O.B.s on Saturday.'

And Marriott went off raging, and did not recover until late in the afternoon, when he made eighty-three in an hour for Leicester's House in a scratch game.

There were only three of the eleven Houses whose occupants seriously

expected to see the House cricket cup on the mantelpiece of their dining-room at the end of the season. These were the School House, Jephson's, and Leicester's. In view of Pringle's sensational feats throughout the term, the knowing ones thought that the cup would go to the School House, with Leicester's runners-up. The various members of the First Eleven were pretty evenly distributed throughout the three Houses. Leicester's had Gethryn, Reece, and Marriott. Jephson's relied on Norris, Bruce, and Baker. The School House trump card was Pringle, with Lorimer and Baynes to do the bowling, and Hill of the First Eleven and Kynaston and Langdale of the second to back him up in the batting department. Both the other First Eleven men were day boys.

The presence of Gosling in any of the House elevens, however weak on paper, would have lent additional interest to the fight for the cup; for in House matches, where every team has more or less of a tail, one really good fast bowler can make a surprising amount of difference to a side.

There was a great deal of interest in the School about the House cup. The keenest of all games at big schools are generally the House matches. When Beckford met Charchester or any of the four schools which it played at cricket and football, keenness reached its highest pitch. But next to these came the House matches.

Now that he no longer played for the Eleven, the Bishop was able to give his whole mind to training the House team in the way it should go.

Exclusion from the First Eleven meant also that he could no longer, unless possessed of an amount of sang-froid so colossal as almost to amount to genius, put in an appearance at the First Eleven net. Under these circumstances Leicester's net summoned him. Like Mr Phil May's lady when she was ejected (with perfect justice) by a barman, he went somewhere where he would be respected. To the House, then, he devoted himself, and scratch games and before-breakfast field-outs became the order of the day.

House fielding before breakfast is one of the things which cannot be classed under the head of the Lighter Side of Cricket. You get up in the small hours, dragged from a comfortable bed by some sportsman who, you feel, carries enthusiasm to a point where it ceases to be a virtue and becomes a nuisance. You get into flannels, and, still half asleep, stagger off to the field, where a hired ruffian hits you up catches which bite like serpents and sting like adders. From time to time he adds insult to injury by shouting 'get to 'em!', 'get to 'em!'--a remark which finds but one parallel in the language, the 'keep moving' of the football captain. Altogether there are many more pleasant occupations than early morning field-outs, and it requires a considerable amount of keenness to carry the victim through them without hopelessly souring his nature and causing him to foster uncharitable thoughts towards his House captain.

J. Monk of Leicester's found this increased activity decidedly uncongenial. He had no real patriotism in him. He played cricket well,

but he played entirely for himself.

If, for instance, he happened to make fifty in a match--and it happened fairly frequently--he vastly preferred that the rest of the side should make ten between them than that there should be any more half-centuries on the score sheet, even at the expense of losing the match. It was not likely, therefore, that he would take kindly to this mortification of the flesh, the sole object of which was to make everybody as conspicuous as everybody else. Besides, in the matter of fielding he considered that he had nothing to learn, which, as Euclid would say, was absurd. Fielding is one of the things which is never perfect.

Monk, moreover, had another reason for disliking the field-outs. Gethryn, as captain of the House team, was naturally master of the ceremonies, and Monk objected to Gethryn. For this dislike he had solid reasons. About a fortnight after the commencement of term, the Bishop, going downstairs from his study one afternoon, was aware of what appeared to be a species of free fight going on in the doorway of the senior day-room. The senior day-room was where the rowdy element of the House collected, the individuals who were too old to be fags, and too low down in the School to own studies.

Under ordinary circumstances the Bishop would probably have passed on without investigating the matter. A head of a house hates above all things to get a name for not minding his own business in unimportant matters. Such a reputation tells against him when he has to put his

foot down over big things. To have invaded the senior day-room and stopped a conventional senior day-room 'rag' would have been interfering with the most cherished rights of the citizens, the freedom which is the birthright of every Englishman, so to speak.

But as he passed the door which had just shut with a bang behind the free fighters, he heard Monk's voice inside, and immediately afterwards the voice of Danvers, and he stopped. In the first place, he reasoned within himself, if Monk and Danvers were doing anything, it was probably something wrong, and ought to be stopped. Gethryn always had the feeling that it was his duty to go and see what Monk and Danvers were doing, and tell them they mustn't. He had a profound belief in their irreclaimable villainy. In the second place, having studied of their own, they had no business to be in the senior day-room at all. It was contrary to the etiquette of the House for a study man to enter the senior day-room, and as a rule the senior day-room resented it. As to all appearances they were not resenting it now, the obvious conclusion was that something was going on which ought to cease.

The Bishop opened the door. Etiquette did not compel the head of the House to knock, the rule being that you knocked only at the doors of those senior to you in the House. He was consequently enabled to witness a tableau which, if warning had been received of his coming, would possibly have broken up before he entered. In the centre of the group was Wilson, leaning over the study table, not so much as if he liked so leaning as because he was held in that position by Danvers. In

the background stood Monk, armed with a walking-stick. Round the walls were various ornaments of the senior day-room in attitudes of expectant attention, being evidently content to play the part of 'friends and retainers', leaving the leading parts in the hands of Monk and his colleague.

'Hullo,' said the Bishop, 'what's going on?'

'It's all right, old chap,' said Monk, grinning genially, 'we're only having an execution.'

'What's the row?' said the Bishop. 'What's Wilson been doing?'

'Nothing,' broke in that youth, who had wriggled free from Danvers's clutches. 'I haven't done a thing, Gethryn. These beasts lugged me out of the junior day-room without saying what for or anything.'

The Bishop began to look dangerous. This had all the outward aspect of a case of bullying. Under Reynolds's leadership Leicester's had gone in rather extensively for bullying, and the Bishop had waited hungrily for a chance of catching somebody actively engaged in the sport, so that he might drop heavily on that person and make life unpleasant for him.

'Well?' he said, turning to Monk, 'let's have it. What was it all about, and what have you got to do with it?'

Monk began to shuffle.

'Oh, it was nothing much,' he said.

'Then what are you doing with the stick?' pursued the Bishop relentlessly.

'Young Wilson cheeked Perkins,' said Monk.

Murmurs of approval from the senior day-room. Perkins was one of the ornaments referred to above.

'How?' asked Gethryn.

Wilson dashed into the conversation again.

'Perkins told me to go and get him some grub from the shop. I was doing some work, so I couldn't. Besides, I'm not his fag. If Perkins wants to go for me, why doesn't he do it himself, and not get about a hundred fellows to help him?'

'Exactly,' said the Bishop. 'A very sensible suggestion. Perkins, fall upon Wilson and slay him. I'll see fair play. Go ahead.'

'Er--no,' said Perkins uneasily. He was a small, weedy-looking youth, not built for fighting except by proxy, and he remembered the episode



of Wilson and Skinner.

'Then the thing's finished,' said Gethryn. 'Wilson walks over. We needn't detain you, Wilson.'

Wilson departed with all the honours of war, and the Bishop turned to Monk.

'Now perhaps you'll tell me,' he said, 'what the deuce you and Danvers are doing here?'

'Well, hang it all, old chap--'

The Bishop begged that Monk would not call him 'old chap'.

'I'll call you "sir", if you like,' said Monk.

A gleam of hope appeared in the Bishop's eye. Monk was going to give him the opportunity he had long sighed for. In cold blood he could attack no one, not even Monk, but if he was going to be rude, that altered matters.

'What business have you in the day-room?' he said. 'You've got studies of your own.'

'If it comes to that,' said Monk, 'so have you. We've got as much

business here as you. What the deuce are you doing here?'

Taken by itself, taken neat, as it were, this repartee might have been insufficient to act as a casus belli, but by a merciful dispensation of Providence the senior day-room elected to laugh at the remark, and to laugh loudly. Monk also laughed. Not, however, for long. The next moment the Bishop had darted in, knocked his feet from under him, and dragged him to the door. Captain Kettle himself could not have done it more neatly.

'Now,' said the Bishop, 'we can discuss the point.'

Monk got up, looking greener than usual, and began to dust his clothes.

'Don't talk rot,' he said, 'I can't fight a prefect.'

This, of course, the Bishop had known all along. What he had intended to do if Monk had kept up his end he had not decided when he embarked upon the engagement. The head of a House cannot fight by-battles with his inferiors without the loss of a good deal of his painfully acquired dignity. But Gethryn knew Monk, and he had felt justified in risking it. He improved the shining hour with an excursus on the subject of bullying, dispensed a few general threats, and left the room.

Monk had--perhaps not unnaturally--not forgotten the incident, and now that public opinion ran strongly against Gethryn on account of his

M.C.C. match manoeuvres, he acted. A mass meeting of the Mob was called in his study, and it was unanimously voted that field-outs in the morning were undesirable, and that it would be judicious if the team were to strike. Now, as the Mob included in their numbers eight of the House Eleven, their opinions on the subject carried weight.

'Look here,' said Waterford, struck with a brilliant idea, 'I tell you what we'll do. Let's sign a round-robin refusing to play in the House matches unless Gethryn resigns the captaincy and the field-outs stop.'

'We may as well sign in alphabetical order,' said Monk prudently. 'It'll make it safer.'

The idea took the Mob's fancy. The round-robin was drawn up and signed.

'Now, if we could only get Reece,' suggested Danvers. 'It's no good asking Marriott, but Reece might sign.'

'Let's have a shot at any rate,' said Monk.

And a deputation, consisting of Danvers, Waterford, and Monk, duly waited upon Reece in his study, and broached the project to him.